

# The Magic Powder - A Folktale from Myanmar

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PRATHAM BOOKS
A Book in Every Child's Hand

Level 3

Once upon a time, in a little village on the banks of the Irrawaddy river, there lived a young woman called Thuza. She was very happily married to handsome young Theingi. But there was one problem that nagged Thuza – her husband believed he was an alchemist and would spend all his time dreaming about ways to turn dirt into gold.

All day, and for days on end, Theingi spent his time in experiments, searching for a breakthrough. Soon, all their money was over, and young Thuza had to struggle to buy food for the two of them. She became very worried. "You should find a job soon," she pleaded with her husband. "We cannot continue like this!"

But Theingi wouldn't listen. "I'm on the verge of a breakthrough! Why do I have to work when we will be rich beyond our wildest dreams? We will soon be able to turn all the dirt we find into gold!"

Disheartened, Thuza approached her father, wise old Thet, for a solution. Thet was surprised when he heard that his son-in-law was an alchemist. He thought for a while and asked to see Theingi. Thuza returned home happily that day, for she knew her wise father would have a solution.



The next day, Theingi arrived at his father-in-law’s house, fully prepared for a scolding. He was taken by surprise when Thet took him aside and whispered, “When I was young like you, I was an alchemist too!”

The two of them spent the whole afternoon discussing Theingi’s work. Finally, the old man stood up and said, “Why Theingi, you’ve done everything exactly like I did when I was your age! You are definitely on the verge of a breakthrough! Congratulations! But you seem to be lacking one very important ingredient in your experiments. You will need this when you finally turn dirt to gold. Only recently did I discover this. But I am too old for this task. It requires enormous effort…”

“Then let me do it for you, Father!” cried Theingi. He was really excited. All his efforts would pay off at last. “Tell me what the ingredient is!”

“Good, you are excited!” said Thet. He leaned closer and whispered, “Son, the secret ingredient is a silver powder that is found only on banana leaves. You will have to plant the bananas yourself and cast certain spells on them. Then, as the plants grow, the powder on the leaves will gain magical powers.”



“How much of this powder will we need, Father?” asked Theingi excitedly.
“A kilo,” replied Thet.
“A kilo!” cried Theingi. “That would require hundreds of banana plants!”

“I’m afraid so, Son,” said the old man. “That is why I can’t complete the task myself…”
“Don’t lose heart, Father!” said Theingi. “I shall!”
Later that evening, the old man taught his son-in-law the magic spells and loaned him the money to start the work.

The very next day, Theingi bought a small field near his home and cleared it. Just as he had been instructed, he dug the ground himself and planted the saplings after carefully chanting the magic spells. Every day he went to the field and examined the saplings. He kept the weeds and pests away diligently. When the plants grew and bore fruit, he carefully collected the silver powder from the leaves and kept it safely in a box.



There was hardly any powder on each leaf, so Theingi had to buy more land and grow more bananas. But he was determined to do what was needed. It took him several years, but at the end of it all, he had managed to collect enough of the magic powder. He rushed to his father-in-law, excited as never before. He would soon be able to make gold from mere dirt!

“Father, finally… here is the kilo of magic powder!” he cried.

The old man was filled with joy. “Wonderful!’’ he said. “Wonderful! You’ve done well, Theingi. I’m proud of you. Now I will show you how to turn dirt into gold. But first, let’s get Thuza. We need her help.” Theingi was a little puzzled, but without losing any time, he ran to his wife and was soon back with her.

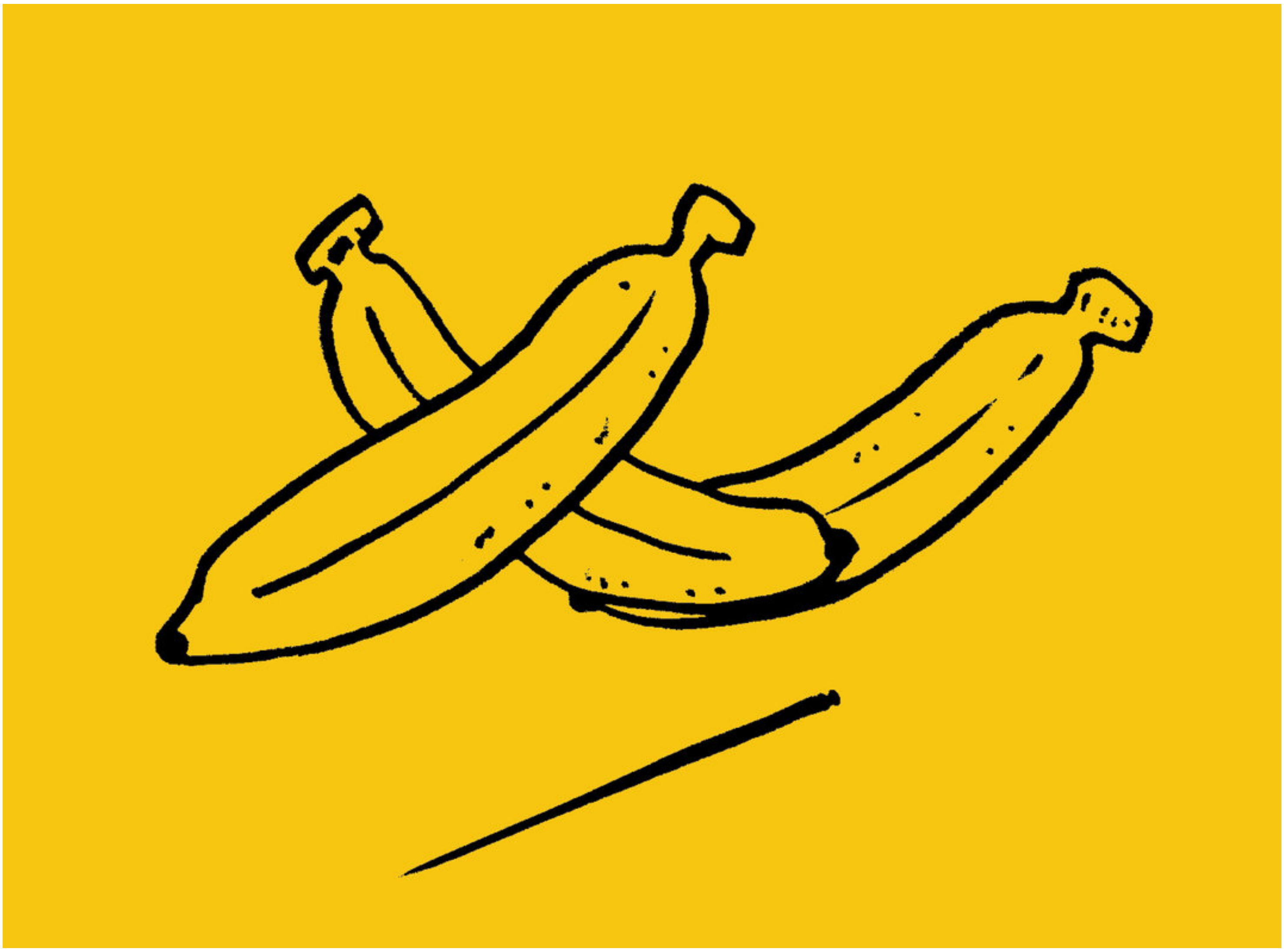
“Thuza,” asked the old man, “what did you do with the bananas when your husband was collecting the powder?”
“Why, I sold them, Father,” replied Thuza. “That’s how we earned a living.”

“Then you must have been able to save some money too. Theingi grew more than enough bananas…” the old man continued.
“Yes, I did,” replied Thuza.
“Can we see it?” asked Thet.
“Of course, I have kept it safely at home,” beamed Thuza.

The three of them went to Theingi’s house where Thuza produced several bags from the loft where she had kept them safely. Thet opened one of the bags, peered inside, and smiled. He then emptied one of the bags on the table. Gold coins tinkled as they fell in a huge, shiny heap. Then he went to the field and came back with a handful of dirt, which he placed next to the heap of gold.
“You see, Theingi,” he said, turning to his son-in-law, “you have changed dirt into gold!”

Never after that day did Theingi collect any more magic powder from the leaves. But he continued to grow bananas. His “alchemist” father-in-law had taught him the best way to turn dirt into gold, after all. He didn’t need the magic powder any more.





**BANANAGIC!**

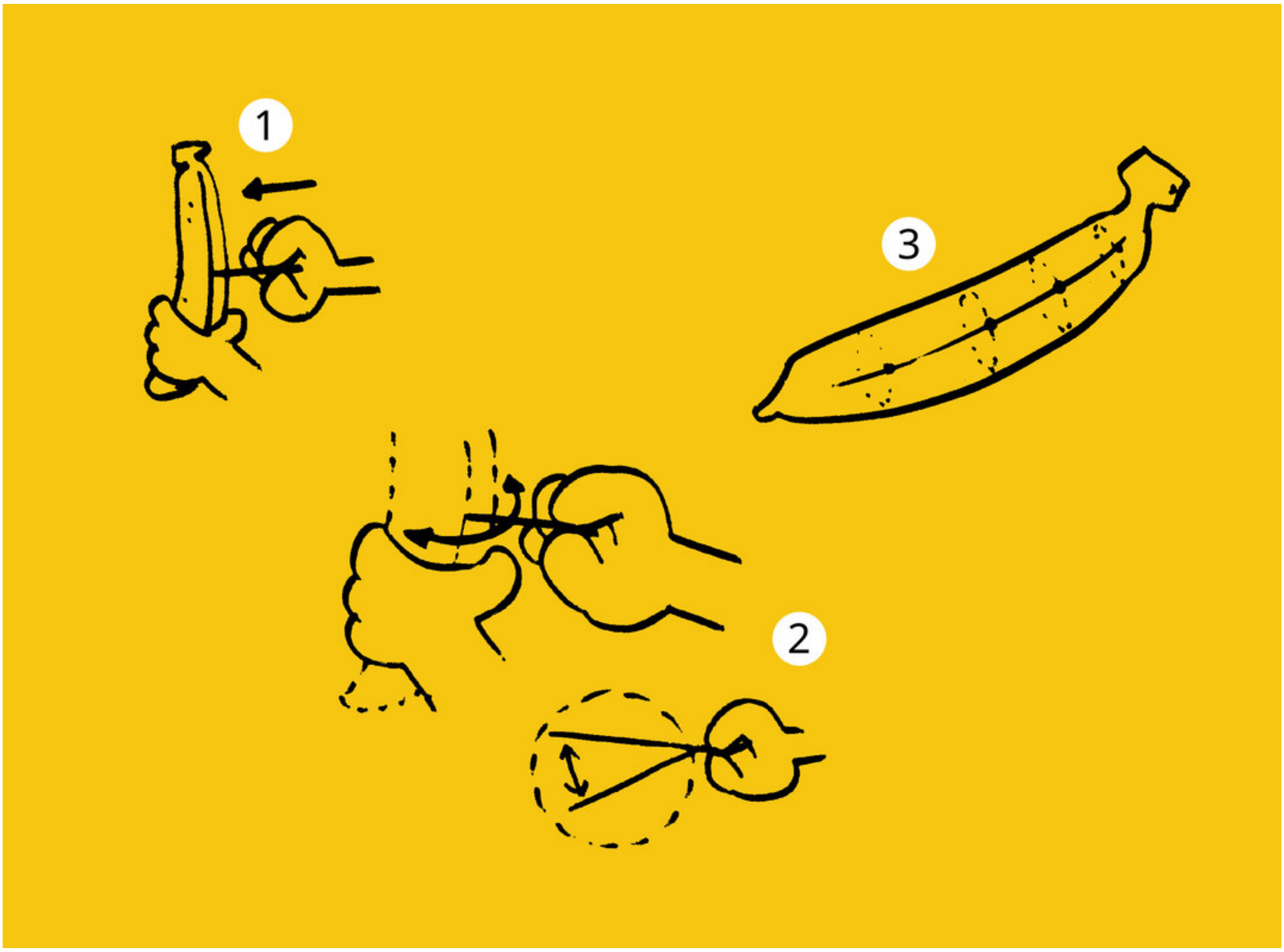
After Theingi’s magic powder from bananas, how about surprising your friends with some magical bananas?! Tell them about a new variety that you have just discovered – one that grows in slices!

**MAKE YOUR OWN MAGICAL BANANAS**

**YOU’LL NEED:**

A few ripe bananas

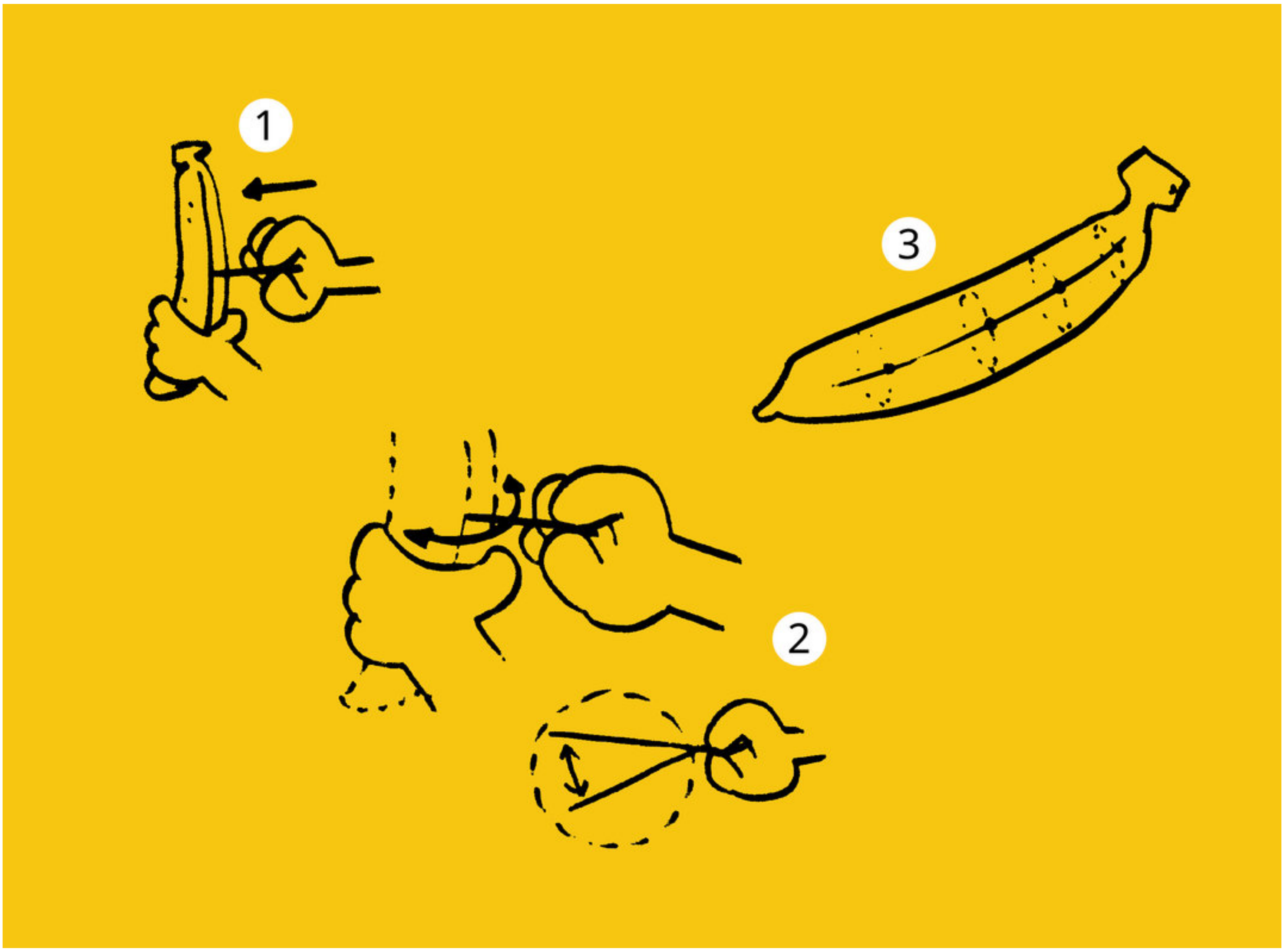
A toothpick or sewing needle




**HOW TO MAKE IT:**

1. Push the toothpick into the banana somewhere along the seam.

2. Without taking it out, carefully rotate the toothpick left and right inside the banana. You should cut all the way through the fruit, but not through the peel, mind you. Also, try and keep the toothpick hole as small as possible – the smaller, the lesser it will be visible.




3. Remove the toothpick and repeat the above step at another spot on the banana, say after an inch. Keep making internal one-inch slices until you have at least five or six. Do these two steps with all the bananas you have.

That’s it – your magic bananas are ready to eat. Offer the “new variety” to your friends while telling them a big story about how you discovered them in the field nearby. When your friends peel the banana, imagine the look on their faces when they find that it is already sliced? While inside the skin! Isn’t that some yummy banana magic?

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# The Magic Powder - A Folktale from Myanmar
(English)

Once upon a time, in a little village on the banks of the Irrawaddy river, there lived a young woman called Thuza. She was very happily married to handsome young Theingi. But there was one problem that nagged Thuza – her husband believed he would find a way to turn dirt into hold! Did he succeed? Read this delightful tale from Myanmar to find out.

This is a Level 3 book for children who are ready to read on their own.

PRATHAM BOOKS
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